

caucus in that effort. We remain optimistic that Republicans and Democrats in the Senate can come together on a sensible plan that adheres to the principles of fairness, expedition and due process.

The promise of bipartisan consensus is within our grasp. If we succeed in coming to closure on an acceptable resolution to govern these proceedings, then we have the potential for not only ending this unfortunate episode, but for laying a foundation for rebuilding a working coalition to address the critical policy issues that so demand our absolute attention.

But to complete the work at hand, we must first set some things aside. We must set aside our partisan instincts. We should reject any notion of political advantage in this process, and act solely in the national interest.

We must set aside feelings of grave disappointment and anger directed at the President for his actions. We must also set aside the resentment many feel over the manner and method of the long investigation that begat these articles of impeachment.

Regrettably, we must also set aside—until this matter is resolved—important legislative work on matters like education, health care, Medicare and Social Security. This, in and of itself, should serve to motivate us to proceed with deliberate dispatch on these articles, accepting not even a day's delay in the coming trial.

And finally, we should set aside the rancor and recriminations that have marked these sad deliberations, and rise to a level of dignity and decency that will be judged favorably in history's long light.

But we will not set aside our responsibility. We will not defer our duty.

Make no mistake: Senate Democrats will follow the Constitution. We intend to abide by the Senate's procedures. We will respect past precedents. We will duly consider these articles. We will insist on fair treatment of the President. And we will hear the evidence presented by the House Republicans who have made these charges.

But we should not put process ahead of progress in this matter. We must find a way to resolve this, and move forward.

The United States Constitution is a document that continues to reveal an uncanny resiliency after two centuries. It's as if the framers found a formula to adapt to contingencies unseen; and to circumstances unknowable. Their wisdom in drafting the Impeachment clause affords us the opportunity to seize one of the options we are considering today. If we now simply apply some common sense, we will find common ground, and the result will be the common good.

I have faith in the Senate, and faith in my colleagues, that we will do so.

The Senate may never decisively resolve this maddening legal argument;

but we must find a way to end this lingering national torment.

As do all my colleagues, I love this country. And I care deeply for this institution, the Senate of the United States. I want to do right by both. Working together, Republican and Democrat, I think we can.

Just as we have sworn an oath today to put the Nation's interests above all others, tomorrow when we are sworn as judge and juror, we must do the same. That will require absolute fairness, due process, deliberate speed, and a final resolution of these charges. The Democratic caucus is committed to each and every one of those goals, and is prepared to proceed immediately toward achieving them.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I want to welcome all the Senators to the 106th Congress. We have had an all too brief and somewhat overwhelming interlude since the last day of the 105th Congress in October. That interval turned out to be dramatic and eventful in more ways than one, and because of events that occurred therein, the Senate's agenda for this year will be more important than ever.

We will soon be considering charges brought by the House of Representatives against the President of the United States. I cannot think of a more serious subject. Yet the Senate has its well-established procedures to deal with this situation. While it is not exactly routine, neither is it totally unique.

We have our responsibilities under the Constitution, and we will meet those responsibilities in an orderly fashion. That is why I have met several times and talked by phone other times with Senator DASCHLE, the Democratic leader, and why the two of us have met with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, whose duty it is to preside over a Senate trial involving the President. We have both consulted and are still very actively involved in consulting with fellow Senators, with constitutional scholars, with officers of the Senate, in terms of the law and the rules of the Senate.

Our duty is clear: To demonstrate anew our national commitment to justice and fair play. That is what the public expects from us, regardless of their individual opinions concerning the President. That is why I am con-

fident that is what they will receive. No Senator in this Chamber needs to be reminded that we are here first and foremost to serve the American people. Americans today look to the future with the same hopes that have inspired and sustained this country for more than 200 years. They want a better life for themselves and, more importantly, for their children. Not just economically, but also in terms of a decent future and a just and caring society.

I want to emphasize now that I have not gone to the media and outlined exactly how this impeachment process will go forward because no final conclusion has been made. This is not something that can be reported in an evolutionary way because there are too many things that have to be considered, too many different parties—Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats, House Members, the White House—and we have had to continue to consider the opinions of all to try to develop a fair way to have an expeditious trial that gets justice based on the rule of law. I think that it is more important that we hear from all parties and come to, hopefully, a conclusion that sets an outline of how we will proceed from beginning to end than it is to always be reporting on the current developments.

Never before have I had so much reported about what I was thinking, doing, or saying when I have said so little. I have been accused of being "holed up" in my hometown of Pascagoula, MS. Where would you expect me to be during the holidays? How about at home with my family and with my constituents, enjoying that precious season of the year.

However, I had no moss growing under my feet. I was talking with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, listening and thinking and developing and evolving a process that I think will get the job done. I believe we can very well achieve that goal within the next 24 hours—one that neither the House nor the White House will necessarily think is wonderful—giving all parties a fair chance to make the case and reach a conclusion that is equitable. We will get that done. And we will get it done, hopefully, in a relatively short period of time, without limiting it to a day or 3 days, or 3 weeks for that matter. It could very well take longer than that. But it will be a fair trial.

Then we have other very serious responsibilities that we must deal with. It has been said as long as we are dealing with this issue that we can't deal with any other substantive issue in the Senate. Wrong.

We have responsibilities that go forward, and we will do our very best to have a dual track. Now, we may not be having debate and votes on the floor of the Senate on bills or on changes in the budget procedures around here, but we will begin to prepare. We will have our committee assignments all completed

today. There will be committee hearings this week before the Judiciary Committee, before the Armed Services Committee, before the Education and Labor Committee—although it has a different name here in the Senate, I prefer to call it the Education Committee because it has that very important jurisdiction under its responsibilities.

We will begin the process and have hearings and meetings. Depending on how this process goes forward, and realizing that we have to understand the Supreme Court has a schedule that it has to comply with, which might give us some time to do some business, we will do our very best to get prepared for the regular legislative process while we are doing our duty with regard to impeachment.

But the goal that I hope we will move to immediately after the completion of the impeachment process, whenever that may be, is to develop some constant themes we want to work on during the 106th Congress. I think they can be described in words like these: security, responsibility, opportunity, and freedom. Now, those are not conflicting goals; they complement and support one another. Security, after all, enables responsibility; responsibility gives purpose to freedom; freedom ensures opportunity; and opportunity fosters security. When I talk about security, I think about security for my mother, security for my son and my daughter and my grandson. I think about health security, Social Security, national security, security in our neighborhoods. So that word encompasses an awful lot.

Our task is to advance on all four fronts this year: To enhance security, promote responsibility, strengthen freedom, and foster opportunity for all. In doing so, we face a tight schedule. We always do, but it is a manageable one if the Senators will help the leadership do our jobs. There are matters that we can consider promptly before our legislative committees even begin reporting major bills that must compete for a place and time on the Senate schedule.

One of the first matters we should take up is a clarification of Senate rules, to restore this institution's position regarding the consideration of authorizing legislation on appropriation bills. It is out of hand. The biggest fight now in all the appropriations bills occurs not on the appropriations but on amendments that are legislating on appropriations bills. I believe we can accomplish that change back to the way it was in a bipartisan fashion. I certainly hope so.

I hope we can do the same thing regarding our budget process, although I may be erring on the side of optimism in that regard. This is priority legislation, I think, that is required to restore public confidence in the budget

process. Do any of us feel that the process at the end of the last year was a good one? I don't think so. In the end, it is going to require will and determination by Senators and House Members to do their jobs on time and on schedule. There are some changes in the process that will help facilitate that. It will enable us to prevent Government shutdowns. It is ridiculous that there is even that possibility. It will control emergency spending. It has reached the point where we have not one super or extra special emergency bill each year, now we have to have two. And it makes a requirement that we take a long, hard look at how that is paid for and at current budget rules.

Important as budget reform is, rebuilding America's national security is even more pressing. Press reports have indicated that the administration will propose some increases in defense spending. That is good, and the Senate will take a very close look at that in committee and in the full Senate. I worry that those proposals are not sufficient or maybe the way it would be done is not the best way in trying to address the questions of pay and pensions and readiness for our military. But we should give that a very high priority. We have been losing ground in this area. This Congress must stop that erosion of our readiness and the morale of our military if we are going to be able to preserve our own national security and protect peace wherever our interests are in the world.

Education is going to be a central issue this year. Democrats say it is important and it will be a high priority. Republicans say it is a high priority. This past Congress passed not one, not two, but five major education bills, and we got very little credit for it. There was everything from some additional funds for IDEA to vocational education, higher education, and other things in between.

For starters, we must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is important. Since its enactment more than 30 years ago, that legislation has been the channel through which tens of billions of dollars have flown from the taxpayers to Washington and back to the school districts again at the local level. In retrospect, perhaps that has not been the most productive system that we could devise, to put it mildly. I think we need to look at ways to cut out some of those stops along the way, the distance between the taxpayers, parents, and government, and how we improve our schools.

We need to find more ways to get more dollars back to the schools and especially back to the classrooms. We need to strengthen local decision-making so the parents and teachers—the people most involved with their children—can act in the best interest of those youngsters.

We should foster quality teaching and promote family choice in education, especially for poor families whose kids are stuck in dead-end schools that are dangerous and drug infested and where they are not learning. We should not, on the other hand, presume to dictate to parents and educators what their priorities should be and how they should spend their tax dollars. So, clearly, this is something on which we will spend a lot of time.

We must continue to address the question of oppressive taxation. Most people will acknowledge that Americans are paying a heavy burden in taxes now. It affects the way they think and act as a family or how they save or invest. One of the most crushing tax burdens in this country is the payroll tax; it is a high percentage. That is the one in everybody's check at the end of the work week and they say, gee, this FICA tax is the one that is nailing me. Congress needs to look at that. We need more tax relief for working families so they can keep more of their own money. We need to have a tax code that is pro growth, pro investment, and pro jobs, so that we don't just give people a tax break but we give consideration to how the changes or tax reductions would lead to improvement in lives and jobs all across this country.

Tax simplification is a continuing need. We need to think about how we can get lower insurance premiums for the taxpayers, whether it is for their automobile insurance or their health insurance. We need to promote regulatory reform and relief across the board, but especially for small businesses.

Nothing this 106th Congress might do—whether in education, tax policy, or environmental protection—would mean as much to the American people as a long-term solution to the problems of Social Security and Medicare. So from the first day of this Congress right up to the last day toward the end of the year 2000, it will be my goal to see if we can find a broad, bipartisan agreement in those two crucial areas.

The Congress can't do it alone, though. The President has to provide leadership. It is not enough to just have conferences and talk about options. What is the solution? What are we going to be able to do to resolve the problems on Medicare? Will the Medicare Commission that reports back in March have a report we can act on or not? Or will it decay in partisan disagreement? Can we find a way to act in good faith on Social Security?

To show my good faith, I have said that if the President will send us a proposal he would like for us to consider, I will introduce his bill and we will begin hearings the next day in the Senate Finance Committee and see if we can go forward. Or if that is not the way it can be done, I am willing to

look at other ways that we can accomplish that goal. It is too important to just set it aside because it is too tough.

There are a lot of other issues we will deal with in the regular order. For example, bankruptcy reform, liability reform for charities, charitable choice in Federal programs, to end discrimination against faith-based organizations, prohibition against partial-birth abortions, as well as child custody protections to safeguard family rights, and modernization of financial services. I have spoken with Senator GRAMM and encouraged him, as the new chairman of the Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction, to pick up the legislation and see if he can forge an agreement that we can move forward on so that we will have broader choices and better service for consumers.

In due time, we will deal with all of those and a great many other subjects. During the next few weeks, I realize that the news media will be focused on one thing. My remarks here will be little noted or remembered—other than the part on the impeachment proceedings. But the record must begin to be made now that we have other very important priorities that are the people's priorities back in our respective States.

This Senate was designed by the Framers of the Constitution to be the steady element in Government, the place where passions are cooled and judgments come slowly.

It serves us well when we take our time and we make sure that the process is fair and the result is equitable.

I expect that to happen in the days ahead. No one can predict the outcome of the deliberations on impeachment, but everyone can expect the calm and careful exercise of our duty under the Constitution. That will not conflict with our role as legislators. It will rather confirm that we are more than mere lawmakers. As Members of the Senate, we are guardians of the rule of law and defenders of the rights of every American. That is our most important role, our most solemn charge, and our most enduring honor.

I yield the floor, Mr. President. I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

CHALLENGES FACING THE SENATE IN 1999

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wanted to take just a moment following the

presentation by the majority leader to say that he begins this session of Congress with a very substantial weight on his shoulders. He is a leader in a Congress that is facing a very unique challenge. I consider the majority leader a friend. I know that these are not easy times for him, and I hope that as we proceed with the important matter of impeachment that all of us in this Chamber can work together with Senator LOTT and the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE, to see that we do the job that we are required to do by the Constitution in a thoughtful, deliberative, and bipartisan way.

I know there are some outside these Chambers who are worried about the Senate proceeding too quickly with the impeachment trial. Those who have had an opportunity to read two centuries of history of the U.S. Senate know that one of the last worries that one ought to entertain is that the Senate will ever move too quickly, or follow too closely.

The U.S. Senate is an extraordinary, deliberative body. The problem has seldom ever, in the history of this country, been that the Senate moves too quickly. Rather, my concern is that we discharge our responsibilities to do our duty and do it in a way that will give the American people confidence that the Senate exhibited the dignity they would expect from this institution.

The Senator from Mississippi, the majority leader, indicated that there are many other issues that challenge us and that will require our attention. He is absolutely correct about that. I, too, hope that we can join together to deal with these issues in a more bipartisan spirit in this Congress than we have seen in recent Congresses.

I want to mention just a couple of those challenges.

The Senator from Mississippi said that the way the last session ended was not a good way to end. He is right about that. It was shameful that so much business was left on the table at the end to be considered and dealt with by a few people—many of them unelected—behind closed doors and then brought to the floor by unanimous consent. That is not a way to do the Senate's business. It is not a way to do the business of Congress. All of us know that. All of us knew it then, and we ought to see if we can find a way to change the rules to prevent that from happening in the future.

With respect to challenges that we face, first the challenges abroad: All of us understand the dilemma that is posed to us and the entire world in what is increasingly a global economy as a result of the economic collapse and significant challenges facing the economies of the Asian countries. All you have to do is ask American farmers what they have experienced as a result of Asian economies being weak and, therefore, purchasing less in farm

commodities from our country, and you will understand the direct impact, not just in that sector, but in virtually every sector in this country. We have a stake in how well other countries in the world are doing. When the Asian economies experience significant trouble—recession and collapse—it affects our country and our future. When the Russian economy collapses, it affects us. When the Brazilian economy is in trouble, it affects us.

So these difficulties that are being experienced in many areas of the world have the capacity to affect in a significant way the American economy. And we must work with our Secretary of Treasury, with the President, and with Members of Congress, to reach out and see that we try to contain the spreading financial problems that exist in other parts of the world.

The other challenges are pretty obvious as well.

When the country of North Korea tests medium-range missiles, when the country of Iran begins testing medium-range missiles, presumably to hoist something aloft and threaten someone down the road, do we need to be concerned about that? You bet. The testing of missiles by North Korea and Iran is a very ominous threat to this country and ought to be of great concern to us.

When India and Pakistan decide to punctuate their poor relationship by exploding nuclear weapons virtually under each other's chin, is that destabilizing to the world? You bet it is. Do we need to be concerned about that? Of course.

We have about 7,500 nuclear weapons in our arsenal. I expect that in Russia and other parts of the world there are 7,500 nuclear weapons. And if the Russian Duma decides to approve START II at some point in the future, we whittle that number of nuclear weapons down to 5,000. That is still far too many—5,000 nuclear weapons on each side? It doesn't make any sense.

So we have a challenge to try to respond to that. We must respond to the issue of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

When you look at the potential threat to the entire world posed by India and Pakistan, two adversaries detonating these nuclear weapons virtually in front of each other, and then consider that other countries are trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction, as well as the capability of delivering them on the top of a missile, is that a concern. When countries like Iran and North Korea start testing missiles, is that a challenge to this country? You bet it is. And this Congress needs to be concerned about it and work with this President to develop policies to try to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the technology for delivering those weapons.

Here at home the challenges also are obvious.